



# SCOPING DOCUMENT

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

## Spring Peak Exploration Drilling Project

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Bridgeport Ranger District

Mineral County, Nevada

July 2017

### Comments Welcome

The Bridgeport Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is initiating scoping and welcomes comments on the proposed Spring Peak Exploration Drilling Project (Project), which is located on National Forest System lands within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The project proponent (Radius Gold Inc.) proposes to conduct mineral exploration on the western margin of the Wassuk Range, Mineral County, approximately 3.5 miles southeast of the historic town of Aurora, Nevada.

The District has tentatively determined that this proposed activity may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) [36 CFR 220]. A proposed action may be categorically excluded only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and the proposed action is within a category listed in section 31.12 or 32.2 of FSH 1909.15. This proposed action falls within section 32.2(8) –

*(8) Short-term (1 year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads (36 CFR 220.6(e)(8)).*

In developing the Project, the Forest Service encourages the participation of interested persons, businesses, state and local governments, and Native American tribes at this time and throughout the process prior to the decision by the Responsible Official. The Project Plan of Operations can be reviewed at the Bridgeport Ranger District during normal business hours and on the project web page (see How to Comment).

## **Purpose and Need for Action**

The Bridgeport Ranger District received a Plan of Operations (#02-17-01) in March 2017 from Radius Gold Inc. proposing an exploration drilling project for locatable minerals in the Aurora Mining District, Mineral County, Nevada. The agency's need is to respond to the proponent's submittal of a Plan of Operations (POO) and to ensure operations will be conducted so as to minimize adverse environmental impacts on National Forest surface resources (36 CFR 228.8, Subpart A) where feasible. The purpose of this proposed action is to authorize mineral exploration activities consistent with the statutory right of the proponent to explore for and develop mineral resources on federally-administered lands under the General Mining Law of 1872 and with other laws and regulations. The decision for the Forest Service to make is whether to approve the POO as submitted or to approve it with additional measures to protect surface resources. The proponent's need is to determine if economically viable mineral deposits exist within the proposed project area, and to define the nature, extent, shape, and economic value of such deposits.

## **Project Location**

The Project is located in the Bridgeport Ranger District approximately 3.5 miles southeast of the historic community of Aurora, Nevada. The Project Area lies on the western flank of Spring Peak at the western margin of the Wassuk Range and adjacent to, and east of, the Bodie Hills. Exploration activities would occur within Sections 28, 33 & 34, Township 5 North, Range 28 East, Mount Diablo Base & Meridian. The location reference maps for the project are the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) Mount Hicks & Cedar Hill 7.5-minute quadrangles. Access and general location for the project is shown on Figures 1 & 2.

There are no perennial streams, springs or ponds within the Project Area. The closest spring is located 1+ miles from the nearest proposed disturbance. An ephemeral wash is situated 100 + feet east of proposed drill site's #17, #18, #19, and #20. Riparian areas are not known to occur within 1 mile of the project area. The project area is located proximal and to the north of Larkin Lake Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA); however, none of the proposed work is located within an Inventoried Roadless Area.

## **Proposed Action Summary**

The proposed action is for the Forest Service to authorize Radius Gold Inc. to conduct mineral exploration for base minerals by drilling boreholes at 22 proposed sites on lands managed by the Forest Service. The project is expected to start in the Autumn of 2017 and would have a duration of one year.

Approval of the POO would authorize Radius Gold Inc. to drill exploration reverse-circulation and/or core boreholes to collect subsurface samples for resource evaluation at up to 22 proposed drill sites. The proposed drill sites will each have a working area with dimensions of approximately 20 by 100 feet. A 6 foot deep sump with surface dimensions of 6 x 10 feet will be excavated within the drill site to collect drill cuttings and capture and contain drill fluids. Up to a maximum of three (3) reverse-circulation boreholes are proposed for each of the 22 drill sites.

The projected depth of the drill holes will range from 1000 feet to 1,500 feet at an angle of up to 45 degrees from the horizontal. The drill pads will be accessed utilizing existing system & non-system roads, overland travel, and approximately 4,872 feet of constructed access road. Slopes range from zero to 15 percent in the Project Area. Locations of the drill sites may be adjusted based on the results of biological and cultural surveys in order to avoid any sensitive areas. The total surface disturbance proposed by the Project is 3.68 acres.

Radius Gold Inc. proposes to conduct exploration drilling utilizing a truck or track-mounted core or reverse circulation drill. Drilling operations will be managed to capture and control rock cuttings, prevent the discharge of drill cuttings and fluids into drainages or down-slope areas, and to keep work sites safe and clean. All drill holes will be plugged before the drill rig vacates the drill site so that only one hole will be open at any given time. All drill holes will be plugged as an operational procedure immediately after completion of drilling in accordance with Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 534.4369, NAC 534.4371, NAC 534.4373, and NAC 534.4375.

Equipment required for drilling will include, in addition to the truck or track-mounted core or reverse circulation drill, one 4,000 gallon capacity water truck, and up to two intermediate-sized flatbed trucks for the transportation of drill rods and other drilling-associated materials. Water for drilling will be hauled onto the project from a private source off of Forest Service lands, where it will be stored in water bladders until needed. Pickup trucks (Ford F150 or equivalent) will be used to provide access for workers to the project site. Work crews will stay in surrounding towns and commute daily to the Project Area.

Constructed road and drill pad construction will be accomplished utilizing a backhoe and an excavator or D-8 sized (or smaller) bulldozer. Constructed access routes will be a maximum of 14 feet in width, with a grade not to exceed 10%. Overland travel, as opposed to route construction, will be utilized wherever possible. Culverts are not anticipated to be necessary, as no perennial streams will be crossed. Vegetation and top soil will be stockpiled whenever practical in areas where significant soil disturbance is required.

During reclamation, sumps will be allowed to dry and subsequently backfilled with excavated material and covered with stockpiled top soil and organic debris. Disturbed areas will be raked and seeded with a Forest Service-approved native seed mix in accordance with accepted agricultural and reforestation practices identified in consultation with Forest Service personnel. A portion of the reclamation bond would be held for at least three growing seasons to ensure successful revegetation and control of noxious weeds.

Specific measures designed to minimize adverse environmental impacts currently include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All equipment would be washed prior to entering the area to prevent the introduction of noxious weed seeds.
- Dust control will be accomplished by watering access routes as necessary.
- Cultural resources identified during a survey of the project area would be avoided by Project activities.

- If undiscovered archaeological or cultural resources are encountered during Project work, activity in that area would cease immediately, the Forest Service would be notified, and the resources would be evaluated. The results of the evaluation would determine subsequent action.
- If ground disturbing activities occur during the avian breeding season (March 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup>), mitigation measures such as nest surveys by qualified biologists and buffer zones around active nests will be implemented to reduce impact to migratory bird activity to the extent possible.
- Sumps will include escape ramps for wildlife and livestock.

Mineral exploration in the proposed project area conforms to the Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan of 1986 (Toiyabe Management Plan), particularly the following Standards and Guidelines for Minerals:

*1- Encourage exploration and development of mineral resources and minimizing possible adverse impacts to surface resource.*

*4 - Require operating plans which minimize impacts to surface and cultural resources and provide for reclamation of disturbed areas. (p. IV-57)*

*23 - Reasonable access for mineral exploration, development, and production is guaranteed under the mining laws. The type of access approved will be consistent with the logical development of mineral properties. (p. IV-59)*

Toiyabe Management Plan Management Area 6 direction:

*p. IV-112 - Management will provide for the orderly exploration, development, and reclamation of mining resources in a manner that minimizes effects on range, wildlife, cultural resources, and recreation values.*

*p. IV-116 - Standard #8 under Forest-wide minerals standards & guidelines will be emphasized in areas identified as having highly sensitive resource values; e.g., the Sweetwater area.*

## How to Comment

Written comments, concerns, or suggestions for this Project should be mailed or hand delivered during normal business hours of 8:00 am to 12:00 pm and 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays to: Jeremy Marshall, District Ranger, Bridgeport Ranger District, HC62, Box 1000, Bridgeport, NV 93517 or sent by facsimile to (760) 932-5899; or hand delivered to 75694 Hwy 395, Bridgeport, CA. Oral comments should be provided during normal business hours via telephone (760-932-5821), in person, or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments.

To provide electronic comments, copy the following web address into your browser's address bar: [http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=52171](http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=52171) and click on "Comment on Project" in the list of links on the right side of the web page that opens. To submit electronic comments after the period for the comment web form ends on August 4, 2017, you should email your comments to the project contact as given under "Request More Info" on the project web page. Please use the term "Spring Peak Exploration Drilling Project #02-17-01" in the subject line of your email.



Copies of all comments submitted, including names and addresses, may be made available to the public. Comments will typically be posted in the “Public Reading Room” on the project web page unless they contain offensive language or meet other criteria for exclusion.

To be most effective, comments should be received by the Forest Service no later than **August 4, 2017**.

## Contact Information

For further information on this Project, visit the project web page at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52171&exp=overview>, or contact David Risley (760-932-5821, [daviderisley@fs.fed.us](mailto:daviderisley@fs.fed.us)). The project web page can also be accessed by first going to the Forest’s home page at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/htnf/>, clicking on “NEPA Projects” in the Quick Links on the right side of the web page, and then scrolling down to the project link. We thank you for your interest in our National Forests.



JEREMY MARSHALL  
Bridgeport District Ranger

7/6/17  
Date

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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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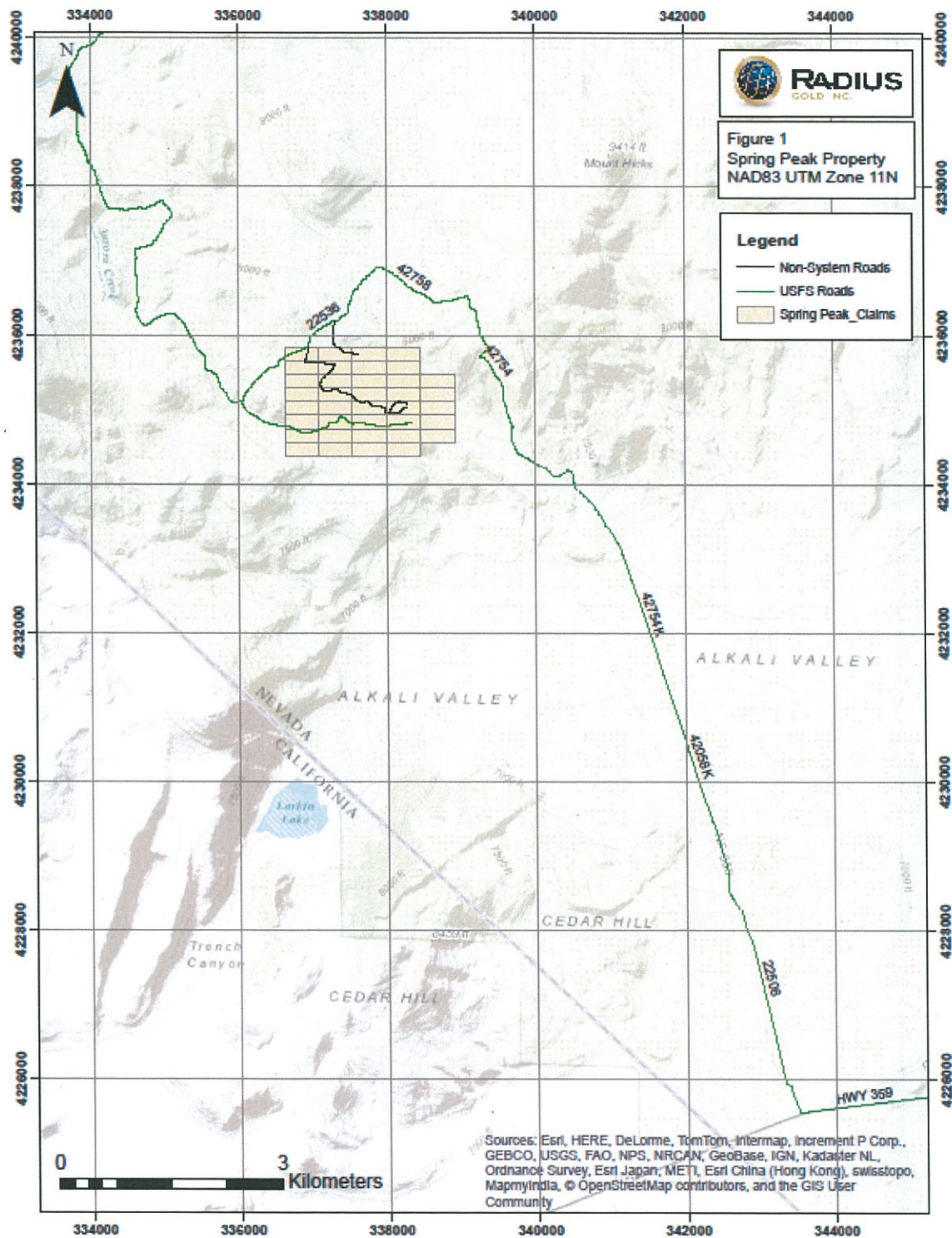


Figure 1. Spring Peak Exploration Drilling Project – Location of Project Area.



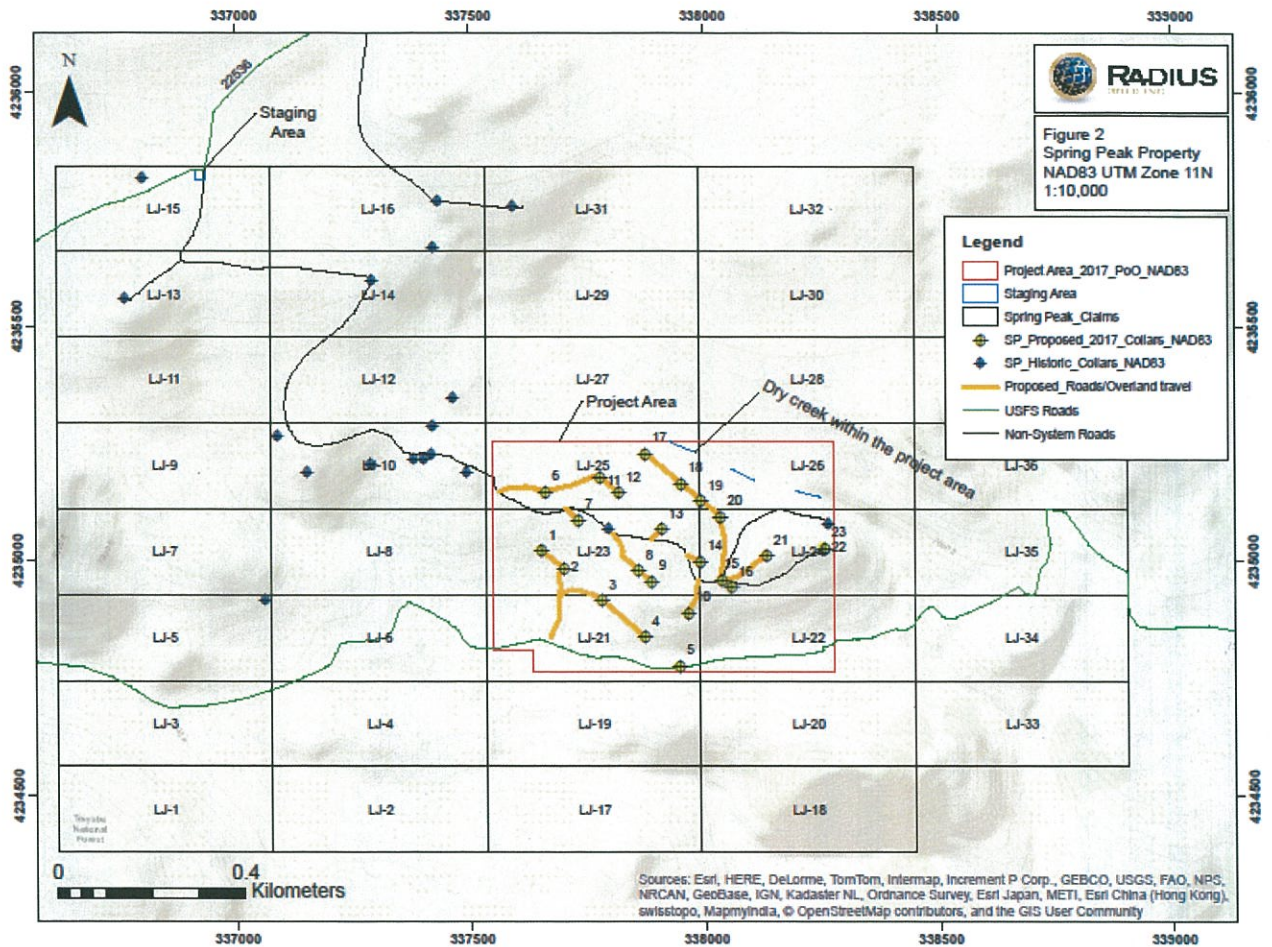


Figure 2. Spring Peak Exploration Drilling Project – Detailed Project Map illustrating Mineral Claims, Project Area, Proposed Drill Sites & Access Routes.